

## SUMMARY OF PROPOSED NATIONAL REGISTER/GEORGIA REGISTER NOMINATION

1. Name: Columbus Coca-Cola Bottling Company

2. Location: 1147 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Columbus, Muscogee County

3a. Description: The Columbus Coca-Cola Bottling Company building sits on the eastern edge of downtown Columbus, just west of the railroad in an area with commercial and industrial properties. The façade of the three-story, east-facing brick building has a gabled parapet, four symmetrical bays with segmentally arched window openings on the upper floors, and large display windows at the ground floor. During the recent rehabilitation, non-historic brick infill of the ground-floor windows, as well as the segmentally arched single-door entrance at the northeast corner, was removed and the openings were restored to their historic shape and size. Ghost-mark and restored painted signage for the Coca-Cola brand are prominent on the façade. The north side elevation is a largely blank brick wall with a secondary entrance at the northwest corner of the original 1905 building. Circa 1928, a rear warehouse addition was constructed, extending to the west of the 1905 building. The addition has a rectangular footprint, a stepped rear parapet, and hardware for two historic exterior fire doors on the west elevation. The building's south elevation is largely obscured by a one-story covered alleyway addition, also constructed c.1928, which provided vehicular access to the rear warehouse addition. During the recent rehabilitation, this addition's roll-up garage door was fixed in-place and a pedestrian door was added along 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Windows throughout the building are industrial steel replacements dating to the recent rehabilitation, except for three original windows at the rear of the 1905 building's second floor. The historic interior of the building remains primarily intact and is situated around a central skylight and lightwell, which runs the full height of the building. The first floor, which would have held the bulk of bottling operations, has a concrete floor, exposed brick walls, a beadboard ceiling, and retains its open volume. Historic stairs are in the southeast corner and during the recent rehabilitation, bathrooms, storage areas, and an additional stair were constructed along the north wall. The rear warehouse addition is accessed through double doors on the west wall and remains a large open space with a barrel vault roof, exposed steel ribbon trusses, brick walls, and a concrete floor. The second floor historically had offices, which remain intact with original clear and frosted glass in wood paneled walls, half-light doors with transoms, and original wood flooring. The third floor was open warehouse space and during the recent rehabilitation, offices were constructed on this floor.

3b. Period of Significance: 1905-1941

3c. Acreage: less than 1 acre

3d. Boundary Explanation: The boundary of the nominated property is the building footprint, including historic additions.

4a. National Register Criterion: A

4b. National Register Areas of Significance: Industry and Commerce

4c. Statement of Significance: The Columbus Coca-Cola Bottling Company is significant under Criterion A in the areas of industry and commerce as a good example of an early and intact Coca-Cola Bottling Company facility in Columbus and for the role it played in the industrial and commercial activities of downtown Columbus. This franchise was owned and operated by Columbus Roberts, Sr., a grocer originally from Beulah, Alabama, who set up shop in the rear portion of a downtown Columbus drugstore and began bottling Coca-Cola in 1902, shortly after securing one of the earliest bottling franchises in the state. The first year of operation, the plant bottled almost 2000 gallons of syrup, nearly doubling the quota required in its contract, and delivered these bottles across the region via a single mule-drawn wagon. Production quickly expanded and in 1905, Roberts moved his operations to the newly constructed three-story brick building on 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Over the next several decades, bottling production continued to increase and technologies advanced, and by 1932, the plant was producing 86 bottles of Coca-Cola per minute and its delivery fleet had grown to 12 trucks. This growth and increased distribution necessitated a larger warehouse space and easy access to the plant's bottled stock, resulting in the two c.1928 additions. According to Constance L. Hays in *The Real Thing, Truth and Power at the Coca-Cola Company*, bottlers, like the Columbus operation, were "as indigenous to the American scene as the post office or the fire department," serving as town fixtures that sowed their profits back into the business, and in turn, helped grow the local economies with increased staff and continued investments.

4d. Suggested Level of Significance: The property is being nominated at the local level of significance as an excellent intact example of a Coca-Cola Bottling Company plant, an important industrial and commercial enterprise in downtown Columbus.

4e. National Register Status: The property received final certification from the Georgia DCA Historic Preservation Division for the state property tax abatement and state tax credit programs on February 24, 2022, and it received final certification from the Technical Services Branch of the National Park Service on March 30, 2021.

5. Sponsor: The nomination is sponsored by 1147, LLC, and nomination materials were prepared by Ken Henson.